DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 288 647 PS 016 997

AUTHOR Gosling, Arthur W.
TITLE Extended Day Child Care: Understanding and Addressing the New Demographics.
PUB DATE Feb 87
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Convention of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (New Orleans, LA, February 20-23, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *After School Programs; Children; Elementary Education; Employed Parents; *Extended School Day; Public Schools; *School Age Day Care; *School Community Programs
IDENTIFIERS Virginia (Arlington)

ABSTRACT

This article describes a before- and after-school day care program for elementary school children that has been operating in Arlington, Virginia since 1969. After a discussion of the need for child care before and after school hours, five areas of operation of the Extended Day Program in the Arlington Public Schools are considered: (1) funding; (2) time scheduling; (3) the structure of the program; (4) staffing; and (5) facilities. (PCB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED288647

EXTENDED DAY CHILD CARE:

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING THE NEW DEMOGRAPHICS

Dr. Arthur W. Gosling

Superintendent
Arlington Public Schools
Arlington, Virginia

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
CONVENTION

February 1987

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Arthur W. Gosling

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 016992

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

All of us here know the important role a school system occupies within the community. The tangible effects of a healthy school system are demonstrated when families and businesses purposefully locate within the community, when parents, community, and business leaders take an active interest in the running of the schools, and when school events spark community enthusiasm and media coverage. Even in the fast-paced, urban lifestyle of the eighties, the school remains the center of the community.

Whether we are consciously aware of it or not, as educators we are caretakers of both the children in our charge and the community within our school boundaries. Usually, the care we give to the community is indirect. By serving the children, we serve our communities. High property values, school-involved citizens, and the attention given to our school-sponsored events permit us to point with pride at our strong relationship with the community. But, these are the eighties, and the lifestyles of our citizens demand that schools keep pace with their needs beyond what tradition has established.

Tradition, in fact, has forced a great disservice upon our students. While all of us face the reality of single parent homes, working mothers, and loss of the extended family, many of us in education continue to retain an image of a traditional family: the father as breadwinner, the mother as homemaker. This traditional family no longer exists. Only five per cent of

all American families still fits this image. The reality is that fifty two per cent of all American married couples are working couples. Fourteen million American children, aged six to thirteen, have working parents. Five to ten million American children are latchkey children; they have no supervision before or after school.

Given the condition of our nation's day care, it is reasonable to expect that perhaps even more children are without adult supervision. Public day care is available to only one per cent of the nation's children. Across the country, only about one hundred school systems are directly involved in day care. The Arlington Public Schools in Arlington, Virginia, is one of those school systems. Day care is not the traditional role of the schools. However, we truly wish to care for our students and the community in which they live, and we can not be bound by traditional roles in an era when traditional roles are disappearing.

In Arlington, seventy four per cent of all mothers of school age children work. We long ago faced the reality that the traditional family is one committed to careers, or one struggling with supporting one-parent households, or one isolated by distance and lifestyle from extended families and loving

neighbors. Our families' concern for their children is just as evident as Robert Young's was for his three children on the fifties' television show, Father Knows Best. Our families' concern has more desperate dimensions.

Children left alone before or after school, either waiting for the school day to begin or waiting for a parent to return from work, account for a large percentage of the nation's troubled children. They suffer from both real and imagined traumas of abandonment, abuse, and life-long fears of invasion. They perform much of the vandalism reported by schools and shop keepers. They are often victims of accidental deaths from poisoning, falls, fire, drownings, and being hit by motor vehicles. The vast majority of these children of the eighties are being thought of and treated as children of the fifties, as children whose mothers are at home waiting for them with milk and cookies after school. And, these children are suffering terribly because of adherence to a myth.

In Arlington, that myth was put to rest in 1969. In that year, three of our elementary school principals were each alerted to problems through either police notification of students' disruptive behavior in the community or through student adjustment difficulties in the school setting. Their concern led

them to investigate the problems and to determine that the students were victims of lack of supervision either before or after school. Sixty-five community members and the Arlington County Health and Welfare Council joined the principals to study the situation and make recommendations. Their study proved enlightening to the schools and to the community. Even in 1969, there were few Arlington families who could fit the traditional image. In Arlington, since 1969, the schools have acknowledged and served a new traditional family.

In Arlington, dealing with the problem of unsupervised children is not merely a nice thing to do for the community. It is, instead, an immediate reality that affects the well-being of the entire community. In Arlington, we have diligently studied the situation, and we know that unsupervised children bring their very real problems to school, disrupting their own learning and affecting the school climate. We know that many parents who care intensely about their children are unaware of the fears and traumatic situations experienced by their children when they are alone. We also know that many parents, themselves, experience great fear and conflict at leaving their children alone or at a babysitters. Their work and careers are adversely affected by inadequate child care.

EXTENDED DAY PRESENTATION

Knowing what we do, Arlington has had in place a before- and after-school day care program for elementary school children for the past eighteen years. It began as a joint County and school system effort and remains so today. The Arlington Extended Day Program started in three schools and served sixty-six children. The very next year, the Program expanded to six schools. Today, the Program is in place in each of our eighteen elementary schools and in our special education center. We now serve one-thousand-five-hundred-and-twenty students, or twenty per cent of our total elementary school population. Twenty-two per cent of Arlington families with children use the Extended Day Program as their primary source of child care. The Program is so successful that our current most difficult problem is finding the space to accomodate the growing numbers of children.

National studies, articles in popular magazines, and the very success of our Extended Day Program show that we are filling a vital need. <u>How</u> we are filling that need is an essential topic for our discussion today. Parents would not choose our Program over neighborhood babysitters or even over no supervised care at all if this Program were not fulfilling their expectations for quality child care. So, it is important for us to understand how this Program works for children and parents. In order to fully examine the operation of the Extended Day Program, we will look

at five areas: funding, scheduling of time, the structure of the Program, staffing, and facilities.

Funding of the Extended Day Program is accomplished through two methods. First, the County Government allocates a specified amount that is placed in the Community Activities Fund. This amount is based on past and projected needs. The money is not part of the School Operating Budget, but the Schools administers its spending. The second source of funding is the fees paid by each family enrolling a child in Extended Day. The fees for each family are determined on a sliding scale that takes into account the income of the family, the number of children in the family enrolled in Extended Day, and the number of sessions each child attends. The monthly fees for a family with one child range from a low of thirty-six dollars to a maximum of one-hundred-and-twelve dollars for the before- and after-school sessions. About seventy per cent of the total cost of Extended Day is derived from the fees paid by parents. Each family's situation is reviewed separately, and fees can be reduced or waived in particular cases.

I have mentioned that the fees each family pays are, in part, dependent on the number of sessions each child attends. That brings us to the second area for discussion, scheduling of time.

EXTENDED DAY PRESENTATION

In the Arlington Schools, we have half-day kindergarten sessions. We, therefore, have large blocks of time when five-year-old children could be unattended by adults. To solve that problem, the Extended Day Program is scheduled in four different blocks of time: before school, during the morning kindergarten session, during the afternoon kindergarten session, and after school. The total Extended Day Program operates from seven A.M. to six P.M. each school day. Parents choose to send their children at the times that best suits their needs. The parents are responsible for delivering and picking up their children.

Within the time that children are present in the Program, they participate in activities designed to be appropriate for their age and interests. Those activities are the third focus of our discussion, the structure of the Program. Because we realize that the children have already spent a portion of their day engaged in a group learning environment, we try to vary their experiences in this out-of-the-classroom setting. Children have the opportunity to engage in active, physical pursuits such as games, dance, and sports. They can also choose quieter activities like arts and crafts, watching films, reading, or socializing. They also have time to rest, have snacks, and do their homework. We try to achieve a balance of enriching activities that satisfy their personal needs as well as

contribute to their education. However, Extended Day is not an extension of the instructional process. It is an extended time away from home when children can be themselves, have fun, be cared for, feel safe, and in the process, enrich their lives.

An essential ingredient in that enrichment is the staff of the Extended Day Program. In Arlington, we currently have one-hundred-and-twenty aides and twenty supervisors. Each supervisor is responsible for planning the program for the individual school, for guiding the work of the aides, and for communicating with parents and school staff. The position of Extended Day supervisor attracts a special group of people. These supervisors enjoy the responsibility of planning specific programs for the populations they serve. They are specialists in child care through their backgrounds in recreation, dance, education, art, theater, and special education. The aides who work with them purposefully represent a varied background. They range in age from sixteen, student assistants, to seventy-two. They are men and women of many ethnic backgrounds. Among them, our students, who are also from varied ethnic origins, find role models and love. The salaries of this staff are paid by the school through the County Government's Community Activity Fund and the parents' fees. Supervisors receive between twelve thousand and sixteen thousand for the school year. They also receive some benefits

such as sick leave, hospitalization, and scholarships. Aides receive an hourly wage of between six to eight dollars. All of the Extended Day staff receive training, and the supervisors attend monthly inservice sessions.

All of the people, student assistants, aides, and supervisors, who work in Extended Day share a common trait. All of them have been hired because they exhibit a strong commitment and love for children. Our goal is to create a joyful, warm environment for the children of our community. The Extended Day staff shares that goal and works to make the Program far more than custodial. They work to provide the love and happiness children have a right to expect.

The Extended Day staffs are the joint responsibility of the school principal and a central office Coordinator. Because the school principal is so directly involved with the Program, it is important for us to look at the fifth and final area of the Program organization, the facilities. As I have mentioned, each of our elementary schools and our special education center has an Extended Day Program in the building. The principal of each building is directly responsible for the Program. This situation provides an enormous advantage for parents, children, teachers, and Extended Day staff. The Extended Day staff is able to

communicate directly with the children's teachers to discuss absences, problems, and strengths of the children. The teachers often drop by Extended Day to visit informally with the children or help them with their homework. The principal is on hand to talk to parents, deal with emergencies, or make knowledgeable decisions concerning a child. In addition, the Extended Day staff can utilize the resources of the entire school system through the principal and the teachers. Our Science, Reading, and English Supervisors have developed specific programs for Extended Day children.

We know that our Extended Day child care program is one of the most comprehensive in the country. It is interesting to note that it is one of only two school-based, school-run programs in Virginia. This situation occurs because, in Virginia, the State Government holds all authority unless it is specifically delegated to a county or city. This is known as the Dillon Rule, and in 1978, the Virginia Attorney General upheld the rule. In 1979, the Virginia General Assembly passed special legislation to permit Arlington to continue our Extended Day Program.

We are very interested in the assured continuation of this established Program. We have plans for its future and for the future of our community. The care of Arlington's children and

the Arlington community is uppermost in our minds. This spring, we will experiment with giving Extended Day children access to a computer lab. Next school year, the Arlington Schools will establish a child care center for its employees. This summer, we will work jointly with the County Recreation Department to extend our summer school opportunites so that children are supervised for the full day and so that parents can have the peace of mind of knowing their children are safe, year round.

Arlington is committed to facing the realities of life. We know that believing in the myth of the fifties' family is dangerous and even life-threatening to our children and our community. Parents need and want to work. They need and want responsible, loving day care for their children. As early as 1965, a national study recommended the use of school buildings as the reasonable answer to an urgent need for day care locations. We not only use our buildings, we provide the programs and staff. The realities of life call for the abolishment of the condition of latch key children. No elementary school child should be expected to bear the responsibility of his own care. The community and the school can work together to relieve our children of such an awesome burden. It can be done. It is being done in Arlington.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arlington Public Schools. After School Child Care Report. Arlington Public Schools: 1984.

Arlington Public Schools. Extended Day Staff Manual. Arlington Public Schools: Extended Day Office, 1984.

Arlington Public Schools and the City of Falls Church Public Schools. Report to Governor Charles Robb and the 1984 Session of the General Assembly from the School Boards of Arlington County and the City of Falls Church on Programs Outside Regular School Hours. Arlington Public Schools and the City of Falls Church Public Schools, 1983.

Commission on School Age Child Care of the Arlington Health and Welfare Council. The Choice is Ours: A Report on the Latch Key Child. Arlington Health and Welfare Council, 1969.

Hanson, Kitty. "All Alone Till Mom and Dad Come Home," Daily News, July 18, 1982.

Kohn, Joan. "The 'Latch Key' Children: An Overview," Report to the Arlington Public Schools, January 1969.

Muenchow, Susan. "It's 3 P.M. Do You Know Where Your Children Are?" Parents Magazine, October 1979.